

3.7 FISHERIES

3.7.1 Existing Conditions

There are no fish-bearing streams within the Project area according to the WDFW habitats and species maps and the StreamNet database (WDFW 2003). However, the majority of the streams, which are mapped as intermittent, within the Project area drain into fish-bearing streams and/or priority fish-bearing streams. Priority fish are defined as any federal or state listed threatened, endangered, or candidate species, or any special status species of concern. The USFWS identified bull trout, a threatened species, as potentially occurring within the Project area, however, there is no bull trout habitat or fish-bearing streams in the Project area.

The nearest fishery is located along Quilomene Creek approximately 1 mile (1.6 km) north of the Project and will not be impacted by the Project. Downstream from the Project area, the lower ends of Whiskey Dick, the North Forks of Whiskey Dick and Skookumchuck Creeks contain rainbow trout, and summer steelhead are identified along the lower end of Whiskey Dick Creek as well. These fisheries are more than five miles to the east of the Project. Livestock grazing has likely affected the portions of the above-mentioned creeks that run through the Project area to some degree in terms of reducing the amount of riparian vegetation present. In any event, the portions of these streams that occur within the Project are intermittent and not fish bearing (WDFW 2003).

No other waterbodies in the Project area, including wetlands and the Highline irrigation canals contain any priority fish species based on WDFW habitat and species maps. If any fish species are present in these other water bodies, they would most likely be warm-water fish that would not be subject to federal or state mitigation requirements.

3.7.2 Impacts of the Proposed Action

The Project would result in an impact to fish if:

- A population of a threatened, endangered, regulated, or other sensitive species were affected by a reduction in numbers; alteration in behavior, reproduction, or survival; or a loss or disturbance of habitat;
- There were a substantial adverse effect on a species, natural community, or habitat that is recognized specifically as biologically significant in local, state, or federal policies, statutes, or regulations; or
- There were any impedance of fish migration routes that lasts for a period that significantly disrupts migration.

3.7.2.1 Within Project Area

No streams or riparian areas will be impacted from construction disturbances related to wind turbines and roads. No wind turbine foundations or other infrastructure is proposed to be constructed within any streams or riparian areas, as illustrated in Exhibit 1-B, 'Project Site Layout'. No Project access roads cross any streams or riparian areas.

All Project facilities will be located a considerable distance from wetlands in the Project area. The closest Project facility is a turbine access road between String Q and String R with an underground collector cable, a low intensity use, which will be located approximately 200 feet away from a small unnamed spring. The maximum setback that would be required by Washington DOE guidelines and EFSEC's proposed rules for Combustion Turbine Standards would be 50 feet. There would be no setback required by Kittitas County. The construction methods and control measures discussed in Section 3.3.2, 'Water - Impacts of the Proposed Action', will be adequate to protect all wetlands and riparian corridors.

The BPA transmission feeder line involves a proposed riparian crossing of Parke Creek. However, based on a field investigation with WDFW staff and Project biologists, the proposed construction activities for the BPA transmission feeder line will not impact fish. Exhibit 11 contains a letter from WDFW acknowledging that there is no anticipated impact and that no hydraulic permit approval will be required for the Project. All construction related to the BPA feeder line will be at least 200 feet from the bank of Parke Creek and no construction activity will take place in the stream bed. Provided best management practices are employed on site and compliance with applicable permits regarding runoff and sediment control is maintained, no fish should be affected by construction or operation of the Project. No bull trout habitat occurs in the Project and there are no fish bearing streams in the Project (WDFW 2003). There will be no impacts to listed fish from the Project.

3.7.2.2 Downstream of Project Area

The main environmental impacts of the proposed action upon fisheries resources include potential adverse impacts to downstream fisheries resources. Given the nearest downstream fishery is over 5 miles east of the Project site, no impacts are anticipated. Provided best management practices are employed on site and compliance with applicable permits regarding runoff and sediment control is maintained, no fish should be affected by construction or operation of the Project.

3.7.2.3 Comparison of Impacts of Proposed Alternatives

All design scenarios will adhere to the wetland, stream and riparian setbacks outlined above.

Best management practices will be employed on site and compliance with applicable permits regarding runoff and sediment control will be maintained in all design scenarios. It is anticipated that these measures will adequately protect fish from any impacts that may result from construction or operation of the Project.

3.7.3 Impacts of No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Project would not be constructed or operated, and the environmental impacts described in this section would not occur. The No Action Alternative assumes that future development would comply with existing zoning requirements for the Project area, which is zoned Commercial Agriculture and Forest and Range. According to the County's zoning code, the Commercial Agriculture zone is dominated by farming, ranching, and rural lifestyles, and permitted uses include residential, green houses and agricultural practices. Permitted uses in the Forest and Range zone include logging, mining, quarrying, and agricultural practices, as well as residential uses (Kittitas County 1991). However, if the proposed Project is not constructed, it is likely that the region's need for power would be addressed by user-end energy efficiency and conservation measures, by existing power generation sources, or by the development of new renewable and non-renewable generation sources. Baseload demand would likely be filled through expansion of existing, or development of new, thermal generation such as gas-fired combustion turbine technology. Such development could occur at conducive locations throughout the state of Washington.

A baseload natural gas-fired combustion turbine would have to generate 67 average MW of energy to replace an equivalent amount of power generated by the project (204 MW at 33% net capacity). (An average MW or "aMW" is the average amount of energy supplied over a specified period of time, in contrast to "MW," which indicates the maximum or peak output [capacity] that can be supplied for a short period.) See Section 2.3, 'Alternatives'.

3.7.4 Mitigation Measures

The Project layout (Exhibit 1-B) has been designed to avoid any impacts to streams and riparian areas. Roads, underground cables, turbine foundations, transmission poles and other associated infrastructure will not be located within any riparian areas or streams. Many of the wildlife measures outlined in Section 3.6.6, 'Wildlife - Mitigation Measures', also apply here. BMPs would be initiated to retain sediment from disturbed areas and minimize areas of disturbance. In addition, the proposed construction activities for the transmission feeder lines will not involve the use of any heavy equipment in stream beds or riparian areas.

3.7.5 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

With appropriate mitigation, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts to fish resources are expected as a result of the proposed Project.